

# EPICUREAN EPISODES

## Mendocino Hotel Excellent California Cuisine

by Carol & Joe Davis

**W**e needed a get-a-way and decided that with air fares so high, it was a good idea to take a short road trip. We hadn't been to Mendocino in over 15 years and had heard that the Victorian Dining Room Restaurant at the Mendocino Hotel was getting excellent reviews. We decided we had to try it and see for ourselves.

It didn't take us very long to drive north on Highway 101 to Cloverdale, then west on Highway 128 through the pastoral countryside to the magnificent Mendocino coast. We soon arrived at the Historic Mendocino Hotel, which was established in 1878 during the lumber boom times when the now lightly populated town had over 20,000 residents. The Hotel overlooks the Pacific Ocean and the dramatic Mendocino headlands. It is right in the middle of town and features luxury suites and rooms for lodging, as well as multiple options for dining. As you enter, you will see that the main floor of the hotel is very charming and romantic. It boasts a fireplace, mahogany bar, Garden Room where breakfast and lunch are served, and the main dining room which serves dinner. The décor includes antiques, beautiful 19th century stained glass, original oil paintings and fine art, which all add to the charm.

The Victorian Dining Room was lovely. We appreciated that they had fresh cut flowers and candle

lighting on each table, which created a romantic atmosphere. We ordered wine and started out with appetizers. We really enjoyed their signature starter, the Crab and Oysters Mendocino which is their rendition of Oysters Rockefeller but made with Dungeness Crab, local oysters, scallops, rock shrimp, smoked prosciutto, spinach and Grana Padano Pernod cream. This is great to share, as there are four and they are not too rich. Next, we had the Warm Baby Spinach Salad made with grilled Mendocino trumpet mushrooms, bacon, and onion vinaigrette dressing which was delicious. You must also have the Wild Mendocino Mushroom Soup, which is served with roasted garlic baguette and wonderful onion jam. The soup has an amazing broth and stays piping hot as it is served in a ramekin. True comfort food.

The Entrees were also both exceptional! The delicious Seared Scallops are served with cauliflower puree, Yukon gold potatoes with crab, fig molasses, and vanilla brown butter. We also loved the Braised Beef Short Rib with wilted local Swiss chard, glace de viande, risotto and candied pecan butter. It was perfectly prepared and so tender! The "Award of Excellence" Wine List features wines from around the globe as well as many local selections. We enjoyed the 2008 Handley Cellars Dry Creek Valley Sauvignon Blanc, which paired perfectly with our appetizers, and the 2009

Navarro Vineyards Mendocino Pinot Noir, which also paired perfectly with our entrees.

The Desserts are made in-house and were delicious. We loved the rich Chocolate Torte with banana brulee, French vanilla ice cream and chocolate sauce. Our favorite was the Meyer Lemon Custard Cake, served with citrus meringue cookies, vanilla caramel and whipped crème fraiche. It was amazing! Espressos and after dinner drinks were the proper finish to our very enjoyable dining experience. The espresso was hot and strong and we particularly enjoyed the 2007 Ceago Clear Lake Late Harvest Del Lago Semillon and the 2004 Sonoma County Estralina Port.

Mendocino is a great town for a short get-a-way. We enjoyed the magnificent view of the Pacific Ocean and the sunny weather. This time of year the local flowers are also spectacular! The shops have become more upscale and we found some great things to buy at Rainsong, Circa, Salie Mac, Quilt Shop and Mendocino Preserves. We are pleased to report that we had a truly great dinner at The Victorian Dining Room Restaurant in the Mendocino Hotel. The California Cuisine made with local, fresh, seasonal and organic ingredients was excellent, the service was professional and friendly and the Chefs, Stephen and Jackson, executed the recipes to perfection. We won't wait quite as long to return to Mendocino, as it is closer than you think but takes you away from it all.

POST NOTES:

Victorian Dining Room  
Restaurant  
Mendocino Hotel  
45080 Main Street  
Mendocino, CA 95460  
707.937.0511 / 800.548.0513  
Mendocinohotel.com

Carol & Joe Davis

FINE DINING  
DETECTIVES

diningdetectives.com



Crab and Oysters Mendocino



Warm Baby Spinach Salad



Victorian Dining Room Seared Scallops



Meyer Lemon Custard Cake



Mendocino Hotel and gardens



The view from the Victorian Dining Room